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MedMen

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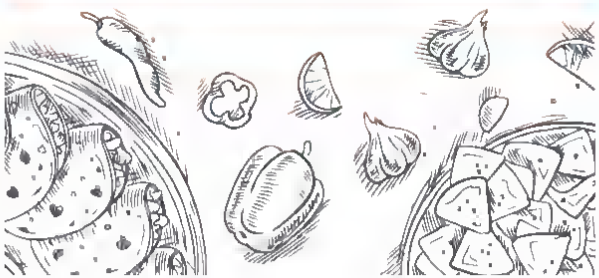

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Illustration and design by Michael Ziobrowski

ORANGE FEATHERS »

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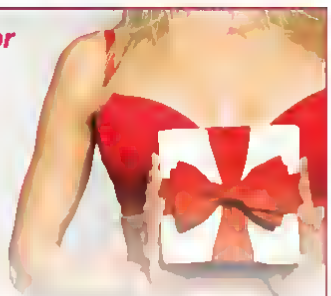

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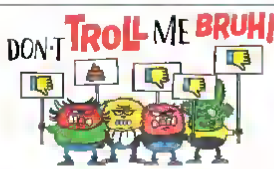


"You smell that? That's the smell of fear. *LA Weekly* is so much better and not filled with your stupid, dumb, political slant, you stupid, cultural Marxist cucks!

—*Libertas commenting on Nick Schou's "Sorry, Folks. Brian Calle's* Irvine Weekly *Is No* OC Weekly"

We respond: What, we don't write enough about doughnuts for you?

Looking for Mr. Wrong?

A fugitive from justice pleads his bizarre case from parts unknown

moxley CONFIDENTIAL

»R. SCOTT MOXLEY

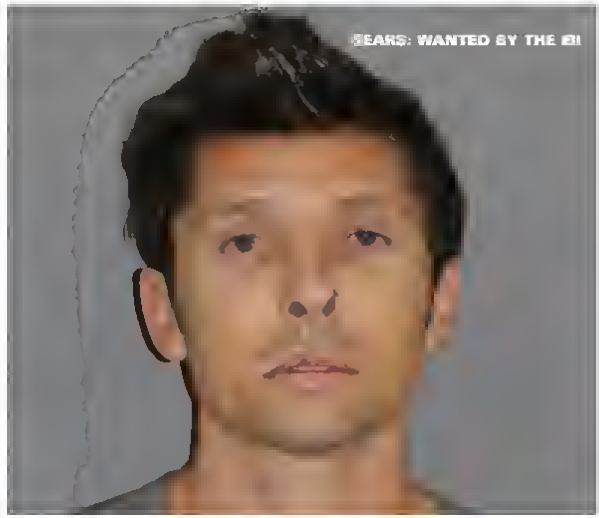
In his upscale, fourth-floor Orange County apartment located minutes from John Wayne Airport and UC Irvine, Johnny L. Sears Jr. placed what appeared to be a rudimentary motion detector on his bedroom wall before the summer of 2014. But the device was actually a military-grade, infrared camera. According to Sears, a lawyer told him if he posted a warning sign that his room was subject to around-the-clock video surveillance, he wouldn't violate privacy laws even after filming sex dates without additional notification.

By now, you know a twist is coming. Born in 1977, the brown-haired, blue-eyed Sears isn't lonesome. While he likes to work out his 5-foot, 10-inch, 170-pound frame, he's also been a devotee of partying at restaurants, bars and social events where he met plenty of adoring women. For example, eight years ago, an Asian woman dated him, then ended the affair after he allegedly stalked and abused her, according to police records.

Those accusations went nowhere with prosecutors, but Sears' latest mess has captured extensive law-enforcement attention. In August 2017, Superior Court Judge John D. Conley sentenced him to 365 days in jail after he pleaded guilty to making criminal threats against a girlfriend, Jane Doe, and secretly recording her in his bedroom. Conley ordered Sears to surrender seven weeks later for his punishment.

But the onetime Defense Department contractor with a master's degree in mechanical engineering and a specialization in designing computer software absconded. Officials believe Sears initially fled to Mexico City. Investigators later wondered whether he was hiding in Europe. Now, he's wanted by the FBI and the Orange County district attorney's office (OCDA), as well as Conley, who rescinded the jail-time order and imposed a prison sentence on him in absentia.

Though I had not followed Sears' case at the state level, last November, I broke the news that the FBI had initiated pursuit. The article was brief without delving into the salacious circumstances of his relationship with Doe, stating, "Sears made a boneheaded, life-altering mistake by placing a hidden video device in his Irvine bedroom that recorded him committing sex crimes against a girlfriend, if law-enforcement officers are right."



FBI

Then, something fascinating happened. The fugitive reached out to me via the internet from wherever he is on the globe to claim he'd been railroaded. He insisted there was much more to his story. According to Sears, Deputy District Attorney Mark Geller had "maliciously prosecuted" him. He claimed he'd been pressured into making a "false confession" to two charges in a pretrial exchange for the government dropping three counts, including the most serious, sexual assault.

Courthouse-corruption complaints are normal, but Sears' mention of Geller piqued my interest. During the county's nationally infamous jailhouse-informant scandal, this prosecutor had been outed as cocky and sloppy. He has also been an ally of Santa Ana cops known to cheat and commit perjury. Could there be merit to the fugitive's claim the case against him is questionable?

Yes.

Doe and Sears, who is 15 years older, met in mid-August 2014 and became infatuated with each other. During the month-long relationship, they had sex almost on a daily basis in every room in his home. On Sept. 7, 2014, the couple went to brunch, got drunk and had consensual intercourse twice. A week later—while Sears was in New York City and they were in the midst of a heated argument, in part over her fidelity—Doe told the Irvine Police Department there had been a third intimate encounter on the day of the brunch. He'd called her "a whore" while digitally penetrating her vagina for "a minute or two" over her screaming and kicking objections, she reported.

When Sears landed at John Wayne Airport, Irvine police detective Victoria Hurtado arrested him and conducted a search of his home, confiscating the surveillance footage. That evidence showed the defendant to be occasionally foul-mouthed and petty pertaining to Doe's ex-boyfriend sending her text messages. It also proved the couple's passionate lovemaking and tenderness. The footage, however, contained no hint of a sexual assault, a fact that didn't stop the OCDA from pushing the charge for 35 months before winning the plea deal.

Other evidence raises questions. Days after the alleged assault but before tempers mutually flared during his trip and he posted nude photos of her on Facebook in retaliation, she'd been lovey-dovey. "I want to be with you," Doe stated. "I'm really struggling without you next to me. … I love you."

After authorities realized Doe fabricated her story, they continued the case to avoid a civil, wrongful-prosecution lawsuit, Sears told me. But it's unclear if he'll escape his plight. We do know there's presently a prison cell leased in his name for three years.

RSCOTTMOXLEY@OCWEEKLY.COM

POLITICAL FOOTBALL
» STEVE LOWERY

Special Super Bowl Edition!

New England update: By rights, we should like them. New England is the region of abolitionists and Kennedys and suffragettes and Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. But, if you don't know, New England is sneaky hateful/racist. All you have to do is look at its sports. The Celtics share a reputation with the Utah Jazz of always just happening to have three or four white guys on the team—imagine *that*. The Red Sox famously did not win a World Series for nearly 100 years, which was all very cutely attributed to curses and/or bad luck, completely glossing over the fact that its owner, Tom Yawkey, was a virulent racist. Yawkey's hand-picked manager, Michael "Pinky" Higgins, once said there would be "no n****** on this ballclub." Indeed, it was a full 14 years after Jackie Robinson integrated baseball that the Red Sox had an African-American player, passing on the likes of Willie Mays. See, kids? Hate is for losers. Speaking of losers and virulent racists, Donald Trump is a real good friend of Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who seems like a really good guy, except, you know, he's really good friends with Trump. How good a friend? Kraft is one of a handful of people who has a direct line to Trump, the others including, we assume, his wife(ves) and the dude who holds the briefcase with the codes to Trump's most recent kink. We assume these are waterproof.

Los Angeles update: A lot of people are saying the Rams don't belong in the Super Bowl because of the most egregious non-call in playoff football history, i.e., the pass interference that wasn't versus New Orleans. But this, of course, is not the first time the Rams have heard this. The team wasn't supposed to be in Orange County when it abandoned Los Angeles. It wasn't supposed to be in St. Louis when it abandoned Orange County. It wasn't supposed to be in Los Angeles when it abandoned St. Louis. And now it's not supposed to be in Atlanta after screwing New Orleans. Man, does this sound like how Donald Trump treats his wife(ves) or what?

Root for: Los Angeles. Because he's really good friends with Donald Trump.

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a clockwork orange »

Yes, We Cannabis

» MATT COKER

Many canna-businessmen were disappointed their best bud in Congress Dana Rohrabacher (R-Putin's Bongwater) lost his reelection bid last November. "Arguably the most vocal marijuana supporter on the Republican side of the House" is how the online cannabis news source Marijuana Moments described Rohrabacher in its political obit.

While the Surfin' Congressman had been one of four founders of the nearly 2 year-old Congressional Cannabis Caucus, California will still be represented there by incoming co-chairwoman Representative Barbara Lee (D-Oaksterdam).

Despite being as far to the left of center as Rohrabacher is to the right of it, she and her departed former colleague joined hands in seeking an end to the Afghanistan war. When then President Barack Obama was considering escalating the quagmire in 2009, Rohrabacher rose on the House floor to say, "Sending in more U.S. combat troops is not the answer. Reaching out to the villages and tribal elders and establishing local militias—perhaps buying them goodwill, if need be—these are the things that will work."

"I listened to his opening statement," said Lee, who had cast the lone congressional vote in 2001 against the use of force in Afghanistan. "I could have given it."

Months earlier, Rohrabacher broke from his party to support an unsuccessful measure Lee co-sponsored that would have required Barry to prepare an Afghanistan exit strategy.

In recently becoming the first woman and first person of color to co-chair the Congressional Cannabis Caucus, Lee called for the reform of marijuana laws that disproportionately impact Latinos and African-Americans negatively. She has sponsored numerous reform proposals in the past, including the recent Marijuana Justice Act, which would de-schedule cannabis and prevent federal agencies from spending money to enforce prohibition against those following state legalization laws.

LEE

The forced retirement of Rohrabacher, who crafted similar legislation last year, has not ended congressional support for cannabis reform in Orange County. Representative Lou Correa (D-Anaheim) earlier this month joined Louisiana Republican Clay Higgins in introducing a bill directing the Department of Veterans Affairs to study the medicinal benefits of the herb.

Even Rohrabacher's former 48th Congressional District has been left in good, green hands. TheCannabisIndustry.org reports that freshman Representative Harley Rouda (D-Laguna Beach) "supports legalizing, taxing, and regulating marijuana production and sales for adults over 21, making marijuana legal for patients with certain medical conditions; allowing states to determine their own marijuana policies; legalizing of non-psychoactive hemp for industrial, food, and medical products; and making medical cannabis an option for veterans in the VA system."

Enjoy Maine, Dana.

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

HeyYou!

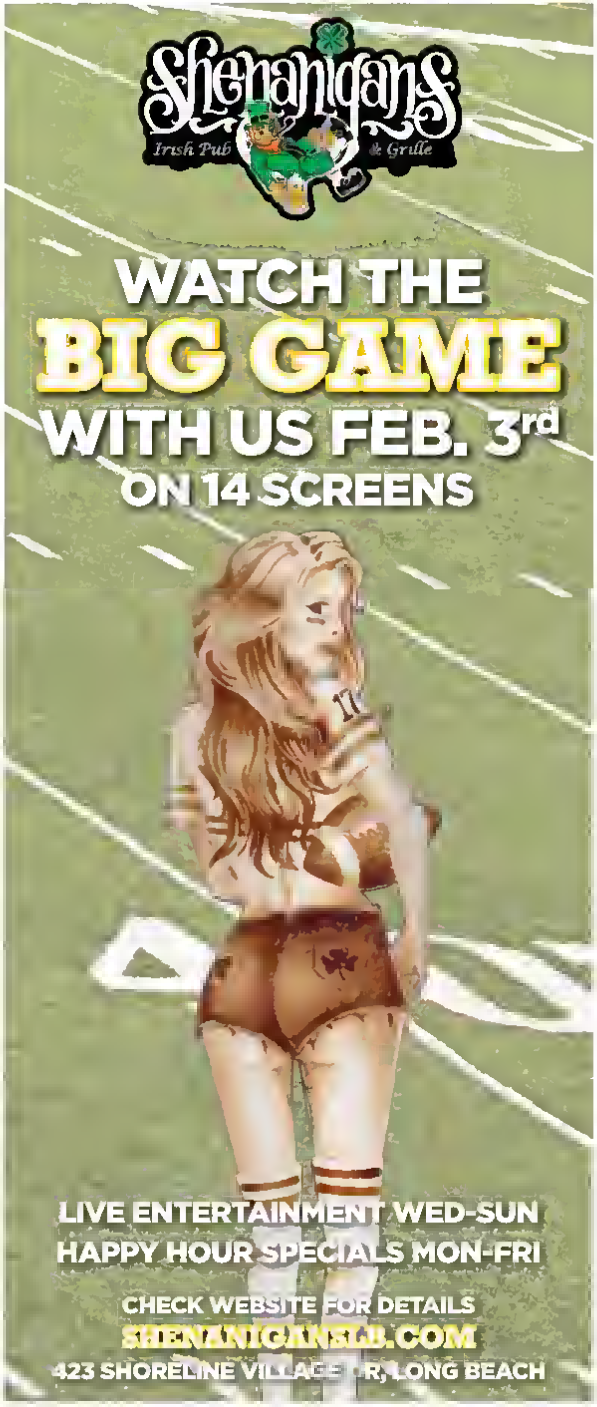
» ANONYMOUS

Loud Coffee

SOME ALL

It was nice of you to turn down the music for us at the lovely new Starbucks that's a convenient few minutes' walk from our home, but you really didn't turn it down that much. Others were forced to move their conversations into the cold outside so they wouldn't have to constantly compete with the high volume. Why not give your customers some consideration by allowing them to be alone with their own thoughts as they enjoy the coffee and newspaper they just purchased from you, instead of blotting them out with your idea of what's really great to listen to?

HEY, YOU! Send anonymous thanks, confessions or accusations—changing or deleting the names of the guilty and innocent—to "Hey You!" c/o *OC Weekly* 18475 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley, CA 92708, or email us at letters@ocweekly.com.



A TALE OF TWO TARIFFS

FOUNTAIN VALLEY'S PEDEGO & NEWPORT BEACH'S THE ELECTRIC BIKE CO. STRUGGLE TO ROLL WITH TRUMP'S TRADE WAR AGAINST CHINA

BY MATT COKER
PHOTOS BY JOHN GILHOOLEY

Two electric-bicycle companies that are about 9 miles apart—around 8 miles if you are riding the San Diego Creek Trail between Fountain Valley's Pedego and Newport Beach's the Electric Bike Co —need only look to UC Irvine for the source of their woes from President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

Orange County's pre-eminent institution of higher learning was the launching pad for Peter Navarro, the UCI Paul Merage School of Business professor emeritus in economics/public policy who is (dis)credited with putting the bug in Trump's ear before the president ordered steel and aluminum tariffs on March 8, 2018.

Navarro first began advising Trump before the 2016 presidential election, which at the time seemed unlikely given the professor's own runs for offices in the 1990s in the San Diego area. In those days, Navarro was a pro-environment, pro-slow-growth Democrat for mayor, city council, county supervisor and Congress (as the "Democrat Newt Gingrich Fears the Most!") But Navarro lost each race.

As an academic, Navarro was first known for writing investing-advice books, including 2001's *If It's Raining in Brazil, Buy Starbucks: The Investor's Guide to Profiting From News and Other Market-Moving Events* However, he became more prominent with the books he wrote about China's rise as an America-crushing economic and/or military superpower, such as *The Coming China Wars* (2006), *Death By China. Confronting the Dragon* (with co-author Greg Autry, 2011) and *Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism Means for the World* (2015).

A *Los Angeles Times* critic labeled *Death By China*, which was later spun into a documentary of the same name narrated by Martin Sheen, "xenophobic hysteria." But the book was partly promoted by a favorable blurb written by Trump

As the New York real-estate developer was trying to separate his campaign from a laundry list of entrenched Republican politicians, he directed his son-in-law Jared Kushner to do some research so the upstart candidate could speak more authoritatively about China. Kushner dutifully went to Amazon, found the title *Death By China*, and then called Navarro, who agreed to become the campaign's sole economic adviser weeks before he ever met Trump in person.

In the early days of the administration, Navarro was appointed deputy director of the newly created Trade and Manufacturing Policy office, which prompted the *National Review* to call him "nutty," while *Forbes* claimed he "didn't know Econ 101 about trade."

"Navarro's views on trade and China are so radical — that, even with his assistance, I was unable to find another economist who fully agrees with them," wrote Adam Davidson in a 2016 *New Yorker* profile

However, Navarro racked up early successes, including getting Trump to keep his campaign promises to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). But on Feb 12, 2018, Trump summoned Navarro to the Oval Office to ask why the administration's trade policy was not more aggres-

sive Navarro obviously produced the correct response because the president then promoted the "deputy assistant" to "assistant to the president."

Last August, a 25 percent tariff was slapped on American companies' nearly 300 Chinese-made products, including electric bikes and parts, which obviously roils Pedego and the Electric Bike Co.

Pedego, which hails itself as "America's biggest and best brand of electric bikes," joined giants in the pedal-powered bicycle industry in going to Washington, D.C., to fight the tariffs. Being a smaller concern, the Electric Bike Co. cannot afford such lobbying efforts.

But if that company's owner, Sean Lupton-Smith, could get before decisionmakers, he would urge them to ditch the tariffs on his bicycles' parts made in China with this caveat: Keep them in place on the bikes of his competitors, including Pedego.

When I first interviewed Don DiCostanzo during the summer of 2015, life was good. Wearing a casual camp shirt bearing the Pedego logo, the upbeat entrepreneur embodied the motto of the electric-bicycle company he owns: "Hello, fun ..."

The world of electric bikes certainly sounds more fun than the one of friction-

proofing oil. Out of Cal State Fullerton, DiCostanzo took an entry-level sales job in 1979 with a company that dealt with the latter, Wynn's, whose logo is recognizable to hot-rod and car-racing fans. He rose to become a trouble shooter for international clients and, in 1999, Wynn's president. Those roles took him to 83 countries around the world.

DiCostanzo later made a more mellow pursuit, selling and renting traditional, human-powered bicycles out of his own Newport Beach shop. That had him riding his own merchandise, but coasting down a steep hill to work meant he had thigh-busting pedaling sessions on the trip home every night. Those grueling uphill jaunts convinced him to stock electric bikes for his customers and himself, and they proved to be an immediate hit with everyone.

Except DiCostanzo.

Concluding the earlier generations of electrics ugly and uncomfortable, he begged manufacturers to create a frame that resembled beach cruisers, which remain the bikes of choice along the Southern California coast, but his pleas fell on deaf ears.

Over lunch in 2008, he explained what he was looking for in an electric bicycle to Terry Sherry, who had built bikes from scratch with his father since childhood and has been DiCostanzo's pal since their CSUF days. That day, they came up with a design on a paper napkin.

A year later, the Pedego co-founders sold their first electric beach cruiser. They went on to add mountain and city-commuter bikes that run on juice, and within a decade, Pedego was the No. 1 electric-bike company in the country.

Headquartered near Euclid and Slater avenues, Pedego now sells 17 different eBike models in more than 100 branded stores in 20 countries. Over the past two years, revenues have grown 76 percent, according to DiCostanzo.

Pedego came along at a fortuitous time. The rise of electric bikes has followed the aging of a population that likes to remain active while still being able to rest for spells. Sturdier frames handle not only the extra weight of the electronics, lithium batteries and other gear you don't find on traditional bicycles, but also the thicker bodies riding on them. Cushier seats help gramps avoid 'roid rage.

Of course, Pedegos, which range in price from about $2,000 to well more than $5,000, are much more expensive than the $99 two-wheelers that can be pulled off Wal-Mart racks fully assembled. Older riders have the savings that make them more likely to invest in electric bikes, especially since they will get out and use them more often than the pedal-powered bikes collecting dust in the garage rafters.

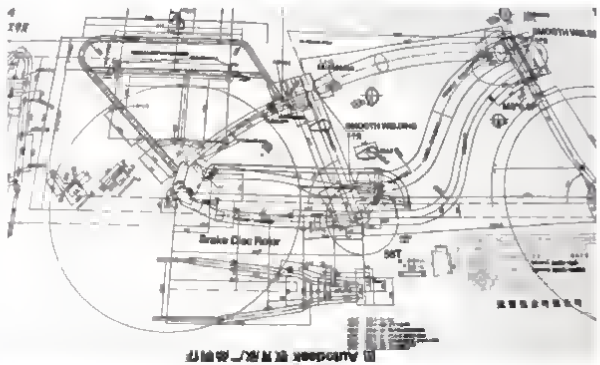
Tariffs throw pricing out of whack, which can be fatal to companies trying to remain competitive. That's why DiCostanzo sees them as "a game changer."

DiCostanzo writes about Pedego's struggles with Trump's tariffs in an Industry Expertise column titled "Rolling With the Tariffs" in the Nov. 9, 2018, issue of *Global Trade* magazine, a business-to-business publication aimed at American importers and exporters.

"The first tariff went through on Aug. 23, a week earlier than expected," states DiCostanzo. "We had two containers from China come into port the next day, costing us more than $100,000 in tariffs that we hadn't expected. Luckily, our volume of summer sales allowed us to withstand this blow, but it had to be a one-time thing.

"We had already planned our expansion to Vietnam in response to the European Union's 83 percent tariff on Chinese-made electric bikes, which was announced in the spring. With the August confirmation of U.S. tariffs on Chinese-made bikes, we decided to move our manufacturing entirely out of China. In addition to moving production to two factories in Vietnam, we also are manufacturing at a factory in Taiwan. Both Vietnam and Taiwan are no-tariff countries."

But Pedego, like the Electric Bike Co., remains subject to tariffs on Chinese-made bike parts. For the Fountain Valley-based company, that includes one of the most important parts on every Pedego electric bike: the Chinese-made throttle.



Since some models have more Chinese-made parts than others, Pedego has begun to look to places without tariffs for them.

"While I'm a big believer that our government should be run like a business and that leveling tariffs is, in theory, a good idea, the U.S. cost of Chinese-made goods is likely to increase dramatically in the United States," DiCostanzo writes. "For example, our average electric bike costs $3,000. Adding 25 percent to cover the cost of the tariff would bring the cost to $3,750, a huge increase for the customer."

"FOR EXAMPLE, OUR AVERAGE ELECTRIC BIKE COSTS $3,000. ADDING 25 PERCENT TO COVER THE COST OF THE TARIFF WOULD BRING THE COST TO $3,750, A HUGE INCREASE FOR THE CUSTOMER."

He credits the move to Vietnam with allowing Pedego "to keep our prices fairly stable." But just when DiCostanzo figured his company was dialed in again, the U.S. announced a new tariff on bicycle accessories of 10 percent that went into effect in September.

Early in the piece, he references his July 23, 2018, testimony in front of a U.S. Trade Representative's panel to protest bicycles being on the tariff list because they did not fit the goals of preventing China from stealing intellectual property and a desire to bring manufacturing back to the United States.

DiCostanzo was not alone in testifying. An attorney for the Trek Bicycle Co. of Wisconsin, one of the world's largest bicycle companies, was also there, as well as a representative from People for Bikes, a nonprofit devoted to increasing cycling in America.

"We weren't just there for our companies; we were there to help the entire bicycling industry," writes DiCostanzo in his column. "We argued that tariffing bikes would accomplish none of the tariff's goals and would greatly hurt the bicycle industry by increasing costs for every type of bicycle from inexpensive kids bikes to high-end road bikes, as well as the growing category of electric bikes."

He maintains there is no intellectual property on bikes and that there is no way to manufacture affordable bicycles in America, that to do so would double their prices.

"We were each given five minutes to speak," he writes, "but unfortunately, our testimonies fell on deaf ears."

DiCostanzo and Lupton-Smith have this in common. Both are affable as well as genuinely super-excited when talking about their truly amazing products. They are also both taller than this reporter, which is why I had to look up the Electric Bike Co. owner's nostrils as he pointed to his first bicycle's schematic, which hangs in his cramped office/warehouse/manufacturing facility along Superior Avenue.

Lupton-Smith explained that the bike's 193 parts are made around the world, including in China, but they come back to Newport Beach to be inspected, then assembled about 25 feet from that schematic on the wall. Maintaining quality control is something that carried over from the company owner's past as a restaurateur.

He'd actually retired to Newport Beach, where he came up with the idea to export reliable, practical and affordable electric bikes to his native South Africa. It took

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

A TALE OF TWO TARIFFS

» FROM PAGE 9

seven years to come up with the first design, and the Electric Bike Co. now offers two models.

Model C (for classic) is basically an electric beach cruiser with the traditional frame shapes in which a metal bar connects from behind the handlebars straight across to just below the seat for males or dips slightly for females. Model S (for step-through) has that center metal bar swooping all the way down to the kickstand area or just about the ground, so older riders or those with leg issues do not have to raise a limb very high to mount the bike. The Vancouver, British Columbia–based Electric Bike Review named the Model S one of the two Best Cruisers for 2018-19.

Lupton-Smith takes great issue with people saying there is no intellectual property when it comes to electric bikes and that they are impossible to build affordably in the United States. Each of the Electric Bike Co.'s electric bicycles are built from scratch in Newport Beach, and they start at just less than $2,000, although they can approach $2,500 if you want the most range out of your battery and a host of add-ons such as cup holders.

Already used to paying 4 percent to 10 percent tariffs on imported parts, Lupton-Smith first explored the idea of building the bikes overseas. But upon inspection of the early versions, he discovered defects such as bearings that had not received the proper amount of grease before being encased or bolts that were not tightened enough while others had been stripped because they were too tight.

Envisioning a future of dealing with customer complaints that would prove costly one way or another—including existentially to his company if it earned a reputation of selling crap—Lupton-Smith decided to keep all building in-house and to deliver the bikes to customers fully assembled inside large boxes, which also increases shipping costs.

He found that it cost about $20 per hour to build a bike in the United States versus $20 per day in China. "The 25 percent tariff—or $250 per bike for our competitors [whose bikes are assembled overseas]—is what our labor costs are per bike, so we felt the tariff was very fair," he says. "We consider ourselves premium bike builders, we know how to build a bike here for $250."

What Lupton-Smith found unfair in the past was that many of the Electric Bike Co.'s competitors ("with Pedego being the biggest") paid no duties at all for parts and no tariffs for fully assembled bikes. Because he was having to pay way more for the labor, it was as if being made in the USA was a penalty.

"So, when the 25 percent tariff came about, Pedego went to Washington, in fact, with other bike suppliers," says Lupton-Smith, nearly repeating DiCostanzo's own words above. "They went to Washington and petitioned against the tariff. These guys obviously have deep pockets—

far larger financial backing than we have."

An offensive was mounted around the same time in the business press, which was also told no one builds bikes in the U.S. and that there is no intellectual property when it comes to such products. Lupton-Smith takes issue with both points.

"They just have to come to our factory," he says with a nod to two young men nearby who are tightening bolts and spokes on an electric bike hoisted on a stand. "We have parts come in from the outside, but we build the bikes to order here. We have a wheel-building machine down the street. We are still building in the U.S., and we know what we're doing, too.

"Also, what the Pedego owner said, which I feel strongly about, is there is no intellectual property with bikes in the U.S. First, I find it quite insulting to anyone who lives in the U.S. In fact, we filed a patent for an internal charger with a plug that plugs into a wall outlet. We got a patent for a design of a universal battery pack that would fit on any beach cruiser in December. We feel that intellectual property is in jeopardy because we are forced to farm some work out to China. We are one of the few people in a state where that industry was developed. We'd far rather have intellectual property and molds for batteries made here."

Chatting on the phone a couple of weeks later, Lupton-Smith conceded there can be problems in trusting items patented in America to Chinese manufacturing plants.

"Once they are made in China, they are supplied to us with all smiles, but a few months down the road, at a trade show in Shanghai or Beijing, our battery pack will be on display and sold in Russia or South America or Australia," he laments. "I am not for one second saying we shouldn't be doing business with China. We should. What we are saying is if we are doing business, our intellectual property must be protected, and there has to be a way of enforcing that protection. . . . Once we stimulate the economy here, a lot of intellectual property will stay here, and we can sell to China instead of giving it away for free."

"IF WE HAVE TARIFFS ON PARTS, THEY SHOULD HAVE TARIFFS ON BIKES BUILT OVERSEAS."

Lupton-Smith says he believes in free markets and competition, believing they elevate standards and breed excellence.

"I don't mind competing with Chinese brands or any other brand, but competing with someone locally and I have to pay tariffs for parts and they have to pay nothing for building elsewhere, that is not fair," he says. "If we have tariffs on parts, they should have tariffs on bikes built overseas."

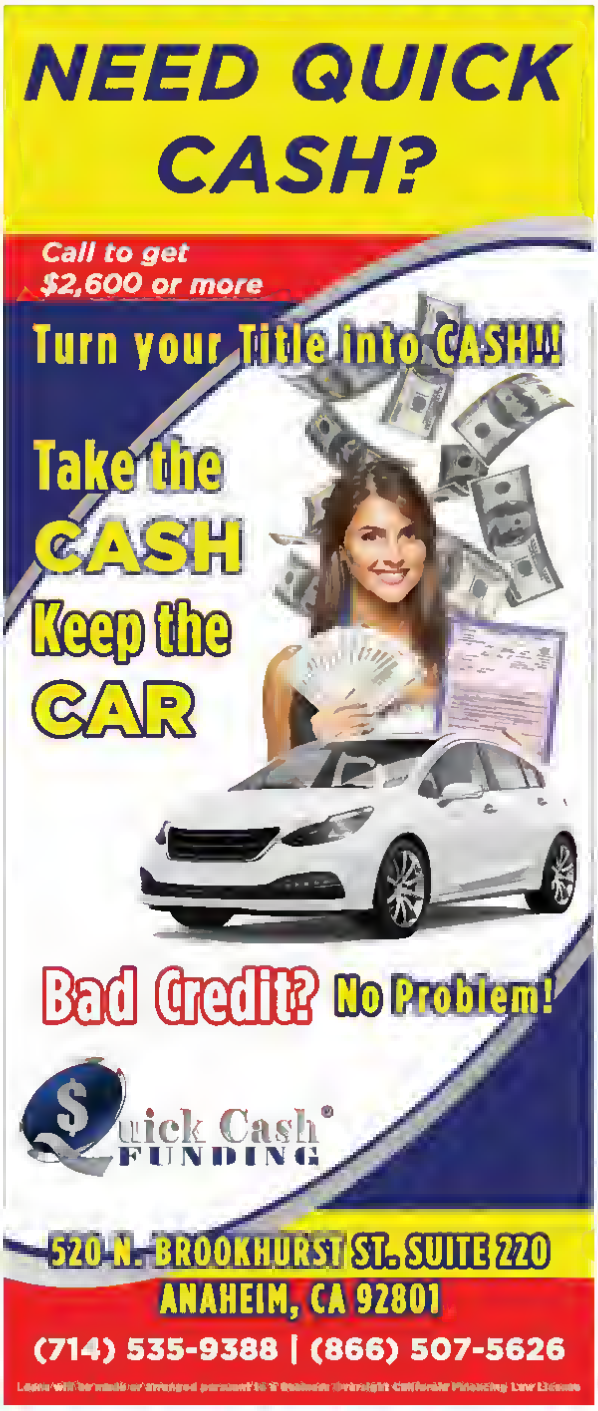
But Lupton-Smith would go even further.

"We have very intelligent people in this country," he says. "Lots of people are on bikes and electric bikes. Electric vehicles and people movers are a huge, growing industry. The Chinese government is supporting a lot of their industry there with solar panels and battery factories. The same thing needs to grow here, or otherwise, not only as a company, but as a country, a lot of intellectual property is going to wind up there in China. China and the U.S. can have a great business relationship, there just needs to be a level playing field."

With a level playing field, he is willing to pay bike builders in Newport Beach $20 per hour and still funnel some sales profits to helping South Africa. He believes his staff's "higher quality of expertise" ultimately pays dividends in the market place.

"If you are getting your bike built for $20 a day, systematically, you do have that advantage when there is no tariff," Lupton-Smith says. "That is not fair. We are concerned all these guys are lobbying the Trump administration [to dump the tariffs]. I'm not a political guy either way; I'm a business guy. Political power probably listens to the loudest voice. All these guys have the loud voices, and we get drowned out. We're saying no, this is not the full story here."

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM



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LEO CACKETT

fri/02/01

[THEATER]

LADY KILLER
Lizzie: The Musical

The life and trial of accused murderess Lizzie Borden has long fascinated the American imagination—not merely because of the gruesomeness of her alleged crimes, but also because of how gender perceptions of the 19th century may have been what ultimately let her off the hook from what appeared to be a pretty solid conviction case. Borden's story has been adapted into musicals, an opera, films and even a TV "Movie of the Week" starring Elizabeth Montgomery (the scariest Lizzie of them all!). And now the ChancesTheater brings you what has been described as a Gothic-rock ritual with a "riot grrrl" attitude (think Patti Smith and Joan Jett). Directed by Jocelyn Brown and choreographed by Hazel Clarke, this is one hatchet job you won't want to miss!

Lizzie: The Musical at Chances Theater, 5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim. (888) 455-4212; www.chancestheater.com. 8 p.m. Through March 3. $42-$49. —SR DAVIES

[HEALTH & FITNESS]

Fun In the Sun
Surf City Marathon and Half Marathon

Fitness buffs can soak up the sun at today's beachside marathon. The 23rd installment of the Surf City Marathon and Half Marathon is open to runners, joggers and strollers of all ages, with so much more to expect than the usual running course. This year, the event offers a Cowabunga Challenge, a 1-mile race course on the sands of Huntington Beach hosted especially for kids and families. The Active Lifestyle Expo presents various fitness-apparel vendors, new health and lifestyle technology companies, and interactive displays to help you learn how to train better. Plus, there will be a special Finish Line Festival, where runners and guests can unwind with a beer garden and live entertainment. Don't miss out!

Surf City Marathon and Half Marathon at 21291 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach; runsurfcity.com. 1 p.m.; also Sat.-Sun. $45-$375; Cowabunga Challenge, $30. —AIMEE MURILLO

sat/02/02

[CONCERT]

SONGS OF LOVE AND PROTEST
HER Concert

If you haven't seen Juditha Hernandez's current exhibit, "A Dream Is the Shadow of Something Real," then this would be the perfect date. Not only will you be treated to her spectacular vision at the Museum of Latin American Art gallery space, but there will also be a wonderful concert in conjunction with it to help her art's themes of feminism and cultural diaspora hit home. Performing are the Los Angeles-based Latin-folk group El Rio and Entre Mujeres, a transiocal musical storytelling group with members based in the U.S. and Mexico. Through the traditional style of son jarocho, Entre Mujeres seek to uplift the stories and voices of Latin American women and the struggles they face.

HER Concert at Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamitos Ave., Long Beach, (562) 437-1689; molaa.org. 7 p.m. $18-$20. —AIMEE MURILLO

[COMMUNITY EVENTS]

Make a Splash
Wavehog Day

In conjunction with the 19th Annual Surf City Splash—which was postponed from earlier in the year because of high winds—today's event encourages folks to take their surfboards, boogie boards and other water toys to hang 10 in the Huntington Beach waters while in costume. Come in your best themed frocks to compete in the costume contest. Prizes—and bragging rights—will be awarded to the Favorite Wavehog, Best Sea Creature, Best New Year's Costume and Best Team Costume, among other categories. Plus, if you arrive early, you can enjoy a pancake breakfast. Proceeds from this wacky good time benefit the International Surfing Museum of Huntington Beach.

MORE ONLINE
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Wavehog Day at the south side of the pier at Zack's, 405 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach, www.facebook.com/internationalsurfingmuseum. 9 a.m. $25. —AIMEE MURILLO

sun/02/03

[FOOD & DRINK]

Sugar High

LA Cookie Con and Sweets Show

Folks who head into the West Coast's largest baking and pastry convention are in for not one, but probably dozens of treats, as well as the sights and sounds of the sweetest of communities. There will be celebrity chefs, including Ron Ben-Israel, Adriano Zumbo and Rosanna Pansino; baking demonstrations and competitions; and such children's activities as cookie decorating, pancake art, face painting, and more. Rounding it all out are classes, panels and, of course, lots of samples! So, fasten your waistbands and get ready to indulge your sweet tooth!

LA Cookie Con and Sweets Show at the Anaheim Convention Center, 800 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 765-8950, www.lacookiecon.com. 10 a.m. $12-$64. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

[THEATER]

All In the Family

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams' debut play hit the stage just a few years before *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* solidified his talent as one of the best of the century. Though it had a slow start, *The Glass Menagerie* eventually made it to Broadway, where his penchant for family dysfunction and complex narratives wowed the pants right off everybody. It tells the semi-autobiological story of a broken family abandoned by its patriarch, with each remaining member disdainfully hanging on, escaping reality whenever possible. Now at the Modjeska Playhouse, this production isn't exactly a basket full of puppies, but it is a damn fine drama.

The Glass Menagerie at Modjeska Playhouse, 21084 Bake Pkwy., Ste. 104, Lake Forest, (949) 445-3674, www.mphstage.org. 5 p.m. Through Feb. 10. $23-$28. —ERIN DEWITT

OC WEEKLY'S CURATION OF THE LATEST FOOD & DRINK NEWS OF THE WEEK, COMPLETE WITH RESTAURANT REVIEWS & EVENT PICKS.

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mon/02/04

[CONCERT]

Songs of the Free

Gang of Four

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Gang of Four's genre-defining debut album, *Entertainment!* In celebration, the band are embarking on a North American tour, bringing their mixture of funky rhythms, angular guitars riffs and cynical lyrics to Tustin's Marty's On Newport along the way. Led by original member Andy Gill, the outfit are known for such politically conscious post-punk classics as "(Love Like) Anthrax" and "In the Ditch." Their most recent single, "Paper Thin," is proof the band are upholding their tradition of producing music that's not only relevant and edgy, but also danceable.

Gang of Four at Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995, martysonnewport.com. 8 p.m. $25. 21+. —STEVE DONOFRIO

tue/02/05

[FOOD & DRINK]

A Gouda Time!

Wine, Cheese and Olive Oil Tasting

The first Tuesday of each month, We Olive & Wine Bar owner Deb Glasgow and sommelier Wes Kollar host a wine, olive oil and cheese pairing. The evening includes delectable cheese samples from the Cheese Shop at the Mix, a full-service store that offers imported and domestic varieties for serious cheese-lovers. Whether you're a foodie looking to expand your knowledge of thoughtful wine pairings, or just looking for new ideas for date night, this event is sure to please even the most sophisticated of palates. Pinkies up!

Wine, Cheese and Olive Oil Tasting at We Olive & Wine Bar, 3313 Hyland Ave., Costa Mesa, (949) 284-0609, weolive.com/costa-mesa. 7 p.m. $35, RSVP required. 21+. —LILA SHAKTI

wed/02/06

[COMEDY]

SILENT BOB SPEAKS

An Evening With Kevin Smith

A little less than a year ago Kevin Smith was in a dark place. Backstage at a standup gig in Glendale, the *Jay & Silent Bob* comedian felt some chest pain, which ended up being a heart attack. That proved to be a life-changer. Smith lost a ton of weight and is now in the best shape in years—he's nearly half the man he used to be! It not only helped his health, but it also gave Smith a chance for a comeback with casual fans who may not have been aware of what else he'd been up to. Expect tonight's show to feature a ton of perspective, humor about his situation and, of course, the same fan-boy nerdiness that's been associated with Smith throughout his career.

MORE ONLINE
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An Evening With Kevin Smith at Brea Improv, 180 S. Brea Blvd., Brea, (714) 482-0700, improv.com/brea. 8 p.m. $25. 18+. —WYOMING REYNOLDS

[NIGHTLIFE]

Hit Those High Notes

Killer Karaoke with Vick Jagger and Sedusa Richman

Show off your singing skills—or lack thereof—while being entertained at tonight's Killer Karaoke. DJ Vick Jagger and Sedusa Richman are well-known for their involvement in OC nightlife circles, and they are local legends in the greater SoCal drag scene. The two carefully ensure their entire lives revolve around looking and being iconic, no matter where they are, with a shared, very much expressed love for musicians such as Cher, Freddie Mercury and Selena. They are the perfect hosts for those looking for an experience outside of the usual karaoke night. Also featured is Haz-Matt, a DJ who has led his fair share of karaoke nights in OC.

Killer Karaoke with Vick Jagger and Sedusa Richman at the Continental Room, 115 Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 526-4529, www.facebook.com/continentalroom. 9 p.m. 21+. —LAUREN GALVAN

thu/02/07

[CONCERT]

Tally Ho!

The Woggles, the Schizophonics and the Two Tens

The Woggles make garage rock out of nothing but the good stuff. "Please Leave Me My Mind," off their just-out four-song EP, is '66 snarl-and-slash punk closer to the *Boulders* garage compilation than *Nuggets*, but their sound hits all the high points from the decade that really invented punk. Seattle, Detroit, Texas, Memphis, Midwestern and LA garage all get their due in the Woggles' extensive discography. "A Waste On the Young" is P.F. Sloan-y Dylan-punk; "What You Think We Are" is a Mudsters-worthy monster, and on their *Souled Out!* EP, they turn in Sonics-style covers of soul classics by Chubby Checker, the Temptations and Eddie Floyd. They're performing tonight with super-solid support from San Diego's maniacal Schizophonics, who play as if they're trying to blow the MC5 off stage, and LA rawk duo Two Tens, who push their drums and guitar way past the legal load limit.

The Woggles, the Schizophonics and the Two Tens at Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292, www.alexsbar.com. 9 p.m. $10. 21+. —CHRIS ZIEGLER

[ART]

HE KNOWS WHAT HE LIKES

'Monumental: Sandow Birk'

Social critique, humor and political revisionism meet European history and landscape painting in Sandow Birk's reliably provocative, witty and engaging big-canvas storytelling. He's celebrated for "In Smog and Thunder: The Great War of the Californias," a tale about an imaginary war between San Francisco and LA told in paintings, drawings, prints, faux war posters, maps, diagrams, models and video. The Long Beach Museum of Art shows his latest jolly trespass into a territory of contrived monuments to historical documents whose legal or historical significance (Declaration of Independance, Miranda Warning, Trickle Down Theory) is often fetishized or only forgotten. He makes them urgent, funny and weird.

"Monumental: Sandow Birk" at Long Beach Museum of Art, 2300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 439-2119, www.lbma.org. 11 a.m. Through April 21. $8-$10. —ANDREW TONKOVICH

Thai This On for Size

Thai restaurant Munch Bistro has a pizza oven and isn't afraid to use it

BY EDWIN GOEI

On the walls of the new Thai restaurant called Munch Bistro in Huntington Beach, you'll find the obligatory, gauzy glamour shots of Thailand. Long-tail boats float near a sandy beach. A farmer crosses a rickety bridge while he shoulders his crops, which hang from a long wooden staff.

Just as Peruvian restaurants tend to feature pictures of Machu Picchu, these Thai-eatery hallmarks were something I wasn't surprised to see here. But then there were the things I didn't expect. First and foremost was the pizza oven. It looked expensive. It was one of those igloo-shaped Neapolitan fornos that can blast-fire a pie in less than 10 minutes. And on the far end of the restaurant, there were the self-serve beer taps. I counted 30 of them, each controlled by a computer-ized debit system that's able to dispense alcohol as though it were Diet Coke.

In all honesty, I knew Munch Bistro had pizza on the menu before I came. But looking at that oven, the math didn't add up. There were only three pies offered. And because the restaurant's full title is Munch Bistro: Thai With a Twist, all of them were fusion-y experiments that combined Thai flavors with gobs of melted cheese.

The Tom Yum Flat Bread Pizza was topped with shrimp covered in a paste made of kaffir lime leaves, galangal, lem-ongrass, tomato, lime and chile paste. The other two flatbreads had different ingredi-ents but the same Bangkok-meets-Naples bent. It still puzzled me why anyone would spend tens of thousands of dollars on that oven just to make three pizzas.

It was later that I realized both the oven and the beer taps came with the space. Until late last year, this spot was Blast & Brew, a quick-fired, build-your-own pizza franchise akin to Pieology. Just as a hermit crab repurposes a conch shell, the own-ers of Munch Bistro adapted. I'd guess the pizzas and the entire "Thai With a Twist" concept materialized because of that oven.

This was a smart decision. For one thing, removing the oven and the beer taps would almost certainly cost more than keeping them. For another, in offer-ing those Thai pizzas, it attracted the likes of yours truly. Let's face it: Food critics are always looking for an angle. And for me, the prospect of a Thai-flavored pizza immediately distinguished the place from the six other Thai restaurants between the 405 and PCH on Beach Boulevard.

And I wasn't disappointed. Thai tom yum pizza packed a wallop. Taking the role of pesto, the paste was uncanny in how it carried the flavors of tom yum. If I dissolved some of it in a bowl of hot water, I'm sure I'd end up with the actual soup. As for the crust and the toppings of jalapeño, onion, bell peppers and cheese, they did their duty to maintain the dish's definition as a pizza.

PHOTOS BY EDWIN GOEI

I didn't try the other Western mash-ups of yellow-curry burgers and a mushroom ravioli served in a red curry sauce. But when I found the barbecue pork ribs from the appetizer section, I decided I'd tasted the best fusion dish of all.

A plate of it includes four meaty bones—a better starter than the relatively banal garlic chicken wings. As the glaze that burnished the ribs tasted nearly indistinguishable from what shel-lacs a typical American baby back, I ate these ribs like I eat all ribs. I relished the burnt, caramelized bits and noted how the meat peels off the bone with just a tug.

But these dishes were all jumping-off points to the Thai-restaurant standards of pad see ew and crab fried rice—the real reason I came. I started with the pad see ew, using it as a benchmark. As my experience has shown, if the pad see ew is great, chances are everything else is. And here, it was wonderful. This dead-simple noodle dish—dark-meat chicken, broc-coli and rice-noodle ribbons wok-tossed with sweet soy sauce—checked off all the boxes. The noodles were everything they should be: a little sticky, a little tacky, but still silken.

And just as the pad see ew foretold, everything that came after was exem-plary. The crab fried rice—each grain greased in just enough oil—was so full of crabmeat, I smelled it before I tasted it. And there was this homey and ultra-savory stir-fry of pork belly, green beans and basil that I swear tasted like some-thing my mom has made.

So as intriguing as the Thai pizza was, to me, it was the unalloyed Thai dishes that make Munch Bistro competitive against the six others on Beach. But just in case it wants to also go against the pizza parlors, I think it could. There's only five on that same stretch of road, and I bet few have ovens like this.

MUNCH BISTRO – THAI WITH A TWIST
18541A Beach Blvd., Huntington Beach, (714) 369-6100, munchbistro.com. Open Mon.-Fri., 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Dishes, $9-$20. Beer and wine.

WHAT THE ALE
» GREG NAGEL

Brunch In a Can

Every now and again, brunch hap-pens. Strategic bites of pancakes and syrup are balanced with runny eggs. Coffee mugs vape plumes of espresso steam into your face. Sometimes, a Bloody Mary, as salty and spicy as she may be, may appear. Other times, bubbly champagne and OJ combine to make a vitamin C-heightened sugar buzz, send-ing you to a friendly game of afternoon nap-roulette, in which you may conk out for a few minutes or wake up tomorrow. Who's to judge?

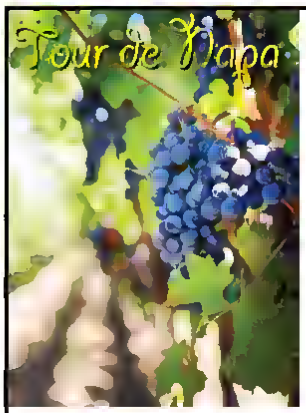
Often overlooked is the satisfying coffee stout, a beverage complete with 100 percent of the daily recommended balance of oats and roasted barley and a healthy dose of coffee. In our world of trying the latest and greatest new beers, this one is still kind of a rare brew to come by, as my last Untappd check in was April 2012, back when Mikkeller was a tiny gypsy brewer, and its big stouts teetered on the edge of being too big, too hoppy and often too cake-batter-viscous for human consumption. Who knew beers such as this would be seen as austere in 2019, when stouts are com-monly sweeter than a Bimbo bread truck crashing into a Hostess factory.

Beer Geek Breakfast is still remnis-cent of those early times and is dialed to an approachable 7.5 percent ABV. The Black Horse coffee adds a rich bean bump to the inky-black beer, and the deep brown head gives off hints of molasses, espresso crema, burnt marsh-mallow and chocolate biscotti. Although beer newbies may joke it can serve as pancake syrup, I'd argue that a pancake wedge may be the perfect garnish to match its richness. It's velvety smooth, creamy rich and a luscious beer to geek out on.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

Mikkeller Beer Geek Breakfast is avail-able in four-packs at various locations, including Veeco Food Store, Total Wine & More, and Hi Time Wine Cellars.

GREG NAGEL



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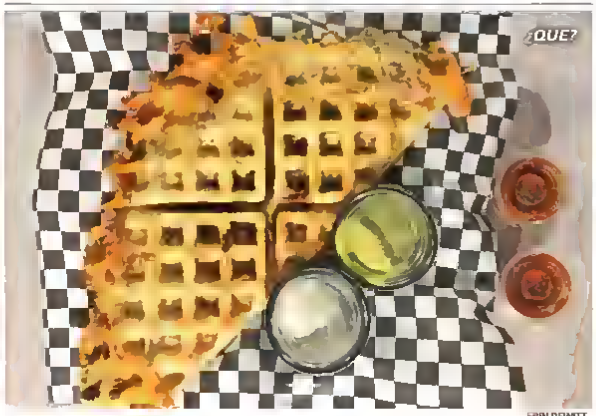


ERIN DEWITT

Mexcellent Fusion

Bomb Azz Tacos lives up to its name

LONG BEACH LUNCH
» ERIN DEWITT

Jr Salazar says his Bomb Azz Tacos brings a "new style of Mexican food" to Long Beach. What exactly does that mean? "We put a twist to the original street taco," he explains. "And we are known for our Keto Cheese Taco and our WaffleDilla," two hybrid items he claims are unique to his food truck.

The Keto Cheese Taco is a combination of meat or soy chorizo with fresh cilantro, thick shards of grilled onions, crema and smooth guacamole in a "cheese wrap," a big ol' slab of melted cheese folded in half. Golden, crispy cheese forms ruffles along the edges, but the inside remains gooey, melted velvet. The dish may be touted as a taco, but this is definitely a knife-and-fork situation.

On the opposite end of the carbohydrate spectrum is the WaffleDilla, which is exactly what its name suggests. A massive flour tortilla is stuffed with cheese, grilled onions, cilantro, more cheese and your choice of protein, all of which is forced into a red-hot waffle iron, resulting in a checkerboard of crackling edges and crunchy squares. It comes with sides of sour cream and guac sauce for slathering. Perhaps Bomb Azz will consider a brunch service because we need more WaffleDillas in our life.

Both these modified items on the otherwise fairly traditional menu are indulgent, calorie-laden, drunk-eating bombs of cheese and meat. But as the logo emblazoned across the top of the truck says, "If You're Gonna Cheat, Cheat With a Taco." Unless you're keto, then you're fine.

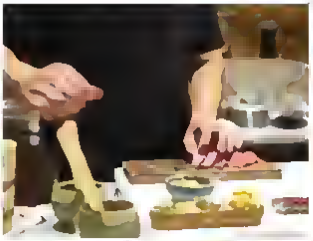
The street tacos, referred to here as Bomb Azz Tacos, are much lighter fare. They come one per order, with tortillas that are dense, pliable, deep yellow and resistant to the typical mid-bite collapse. The standard onions-cilantro-guac combo accompanies your choice of proteins: carne asada (chopped so fine it nearly resembles ground beef), chicken, al pastor (slow-simmered, sweet-spicy), soy chorizo, regular chorizo or carnitas.

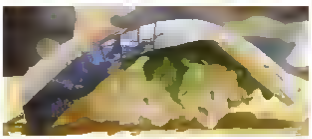
The Bomb Azz Tacos truck occasionally skirts around the Long Beach-adjacent area in the earlier afternoon hours—fans can locate it via its Instagram page (@bomb_azz_tacos)—but starting about 3 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays, you'll find it parked in front of the Rite Aid on East Broadway and Cherry Avenue. (Bomb Azz used to sit in a car-wash parking lot west of Long Beach Airport, but this location has decidedly better traffic.)

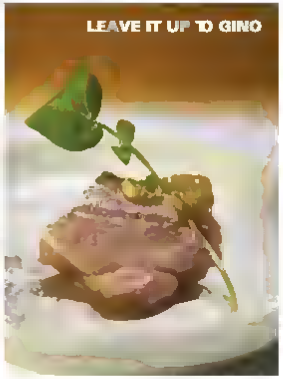
Salazar isn't exactly new to the food-service game. "My family has a history of running a few restaurants in the city," he says. "And my aunt used to own a taco truck back in the late '80s and early '90s."

In operation now for just more than three months, Bomb Azz already has a dedicated following, both online and in real life. With its gold-toothed donkey holding up two tacos next to the photo-tagging-perfect scrawl "Ended Up at Bomb Azz Tacos," the truck hosts a steady crowd of people, no matter the hour. "We just want to bring an exciting new restaurant on wheels for the public to come and enjoy."

BOMB AZZ TACOS
1524 E. Broadway, Long Beach, (562) 274-6954.







PHOTOS BY GREG NAGEL

Curse-Worthy

OMG—Omakase by Gino

EAT & DRINK THIS NOW
» GREG NAGEL

After taking my first bite at the new 10-seat omakase experience in downtown Santa Ana, "Oh, my God" were the words I expelled. It's also the name of the restaurant: OMG—Omakase by Gino.

Subsequent bites produced an array of comedic expletives I've never used in print. "This is the place that'll make me burst my zero-F-word streak in the *OC Weekly*," I whisper to my wife

"You haven't cursed in *OC Weekly* yet?" she snarks back.

"Eff you, babe."

The restaurant is a one-man-band, with renowned sushi chef Gino Choi performing surgical-like cuts on fish flown in daily from Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo, Japan, as well as from local purveyors he's worked with for more than 20 years

Cool jazz floats over the airwaves in the tiny spot—sometimes plucky-bass Mingus, sometimes horny Coltrane—driving the sights and smells of fresh sushi through your delicate olfactories. Warm wood and historic brick features that hold up the space provide warmth, while the curtain in the front window drowns out Santa Ana's busy Main Street. From inside, it's easy to imagine you're in a hole-in-the-wall Tokyo sushi spot, soaking in the intimate, raw atmosphere.

Omakase means chef's choice, and the 16 courses thrown your way are a complete rainbow of what sushi is all about. Although the menu changes daily, it usually offers an array of seafood including otoro, endangered-yet-yummy bluefin tuna, Japanese kampachi, seasonal rockfish, ocean trout and so much more

After course 10, it's easy to forget where you're at or how much Asahi Super Dry you've ordered. Various high-end sake and low-end beers adorn the drinks menu, but there's something magical about Asahi's cracker-like beer that refreshes the palate, all while providing some much-needed effervescence. Wine and hot or cold matcha are also options.

Two seatings happen daily, and the $105 prix fixe tag includes three appetizers, a satisfying sashimi plate worthy of a visit on its own, 10 pieces of nigiri, two *owan* (signature dishes) and dessert.

Outside of the aquarium of sushi, some minimally delicious dishes are snuck in. Chawanmushi is a custardy egg dish that's full of umami slickness. Uni pasta, with thick and hearty noodles, is topped with white truffles and urchin from a farm in Santa Barbara. A soup breaks the cool-temperature rhythm with a hearty broth and plump and girthy mushrooms.

Shime saba, a marinated mackerel, is somewhat of a barometer of any great sushi restaurant. Served with the metallic-looking side out, the bite can be somewhat rich with unctuous fish oils, yet Gino's is a flavor adventure with delicate soft edges. It's so good he should have named it OMFG. And with that F, there is my first foray into fuckery at the *Weekly*

OMG—OMAKASE BY GINO
304 N. Main St., Santa Ana, (657) 231-6008.

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We hope to be a sweet part of your [illegible] day

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(714) 444-2278 | cakes@simplysweetcakery.com

Game Changers

OC Film Fiesta duo goes national with *Dreamocracy In America (Nuevo DIA)*

BY MATT COKER

R. MALDONADO

Victor Payan and Sandra "Pocha" Peña Sarmiento need a wheel barrel for what's on their plate. The married couple organizes the annual OC Film Fiesta—under the umbrella of their Media Arts Santa Ana (MASA)—and run OC Cinema Camp and the Mural and Media Class for youth. Up next is the Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Film Festival March 15-17.

Some MASA workshops, guest filmmaker programs and other assorted community events have been presented with such partners as Bowers Museum, the Santa Ana Unified School District, Orange County's Heritage Museum, the Mexican Consulate and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Peña Sarmiento chaired Santa Ana's Arts and Culture Commission while running in the City Council Ward 2 race in November, in which she finished second to Councilman David Penaloza. (Her takeaway: "So much of politics is performance art.")

But Payan and Peña Sarmiento just received 50,000 reasons to take their act on the road. Creative Capital chose them from among 5,200 applicants to receive one of 50 $50,000 artist grants.

"I'm used to grants of $7,000," Peña Sarmiento says. "This is definitely game changing."

Creative Capital fills a vacuum created in 1996 by Congress, which mandated that National Endowment for the Arts grants go only to projects, not to individual artists. Mr. and Mrs. MASA had participated in a workshop the New York City-based nonprofit staged a decade ago, and they had applied for grant funding three or four times before. But the couple's expectation was to again get frozen out by, as Peña Sarmiento put it, "New York people giving New York awards for New York stories about New York people."

Such cynicism is justified. Of the 50 latest Creative Capital recipients, the only other Southern California projects this cycle are: Riverside gender-nonconforming/transmogrifying artist Ni'Ja Whitson's dance performance *The Unarrival Experiments*; Santa Monica playwright/choreographer/stage director Larissa FastHorse's South Dakota Lakota community-generated *Native Nation*; and, from Los Angeles, Lauren McCarthy's data-visualization and performance-art piece *Surrogate* and Alison O'Daniel's sculpture/video art story of a deaf drummer, *The Tuba Thieves*. (Kia LaBeija and Tauna Larot's photo/experimental film project *Wom(y)n With a Y* boasts LA and New York as bases.)

Rising to the top with Creative Capital required a bold, ambitious proposal. Payan and Peña Sarmiento offered up a modernization of French diplomat, historian and political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville's sociological study *Democracy In America* (or *De la Democratie en Amérique* as it was known in two volumes published in France in 1835 and 1840).

Figuring Tocqueville ended his journey without encountering a massive geographical region, let alone entire populations, Payan and Peña Sarmiento tweaked the name to *Dreamocracy In America (Nuevo DIA)*, which is described as "a take-no-prisoners time-travelling transdisciplinary tour of America that picks up Alexis de Tocqueville's journey into the American character where he left off and completes his epic project by examining immigrant- and refugee-detention centers, Native reservations, and communities west of the 1831 U.S. border."

No wonder it is the only Santa Ana project to get Creative Capital recognition. "Our application was a reflection of our times, this multidimensional intersection of society," says Peña Sarmiento. "We're reflecting that reality, so it's really great they opened up to include us."

That's important because it also exposes MASA to the nation's big three charity foundations (the Ford, Rockefeller and MacArthur). The selection process alone had the couple meeting with representatives of the Smithsonian, various New York galleries and the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts.

"It also opened doors all over the region, including Los Angeles," says Payan, adding that it has put spotlights on the larger Santa Ana and Orange County art communities.

He estimates it will take five or six years (and two more election cycles) to complete *Dreamocracy In America (Nuevo DIA)*. The couple is currently mapping travel plans that so far include stops in Denver, San Diego, the Mexican border, and Arizona and New Mexico Apache reservations. "Santa Ana will definitely be one" project city, notes Peña Sarmiento, who was born there.

The goal is to share what they know about stagecraft with migrants, DREAMers, indigenous Americans, transgender warriors, and MeToo and Black Lives Matter activists—or, as Payan put it, "all the communities that are being attacked right now." The couple will in turn learn from them, and all will create art together.

"We will be speaking with people about the issues they are grappling with, what they are most wounded by, and we will use theater and poetry to deal with that," says Payan, "even game shows." (Peña Sarmiento has experience with those from past work with Telemundo and the Latin American Fox Channel.)

Whatever the format, healthy doses of humor will be added because "we can heal with laughs," says Payan.

"Humor is a really sharp tool in breaking through biases and the old order," adds Peña Sarmiento. "Humor gets you around the suffering and changes the narrative to something else."

They will wind up with a national project "because in the end we'll have a total view of the picture," she says of *Dreamocracy In America (Nuevo DIA)*. The couple vows it won't detract from ongoing local projects, but rather enhance them.

Asked if footage from their travels might flash on OC Film Fiesta screens, Payan replied, "Oh, yeah," as though it were a foregone conclusion. The veteran of documentary filmmaking for public television already envisions a "Dreamocracy In America" theme for a festival short-film challenge.

"We're going to have a lot of fun with this," Payan says. "It is still kind of sinking in, the impact this will have not only with this project, but also with our careers. I'm excited. We invite everyone to be a part of it."

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

You May Now Call Him 'Dr. McNally'

BY MATT COKER

EVERY ACT OF LIFE

THE FILM COLLABORATIVE

On the Basis of Sex. Ruth Bader Ginsburg struggles for equal rights and to overcome what she has to so she can become a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, 25471 Rancho Niguel Rd., Laguna Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 11 a.m., 1:45, 4:30, 7:15 & 10:05 p.m. $8-$10; also at Regency South Coast Village, 1561 W. Sunflower Ave., Santa Ana, (714) 557-5701. Thurs., Jan. 31, 4 & 9:50 p.m. $8-$11*

Green Book. A working-class Italian-American bouncer drives an African American classical pianist on a tour of venues through the 1960s American South. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 11:05 a.m., 2:10, 5:05 & 8:05 p.m. $8-$10; also at Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-5701. Thurs., Jan. 31, 12:30, 3:30, 6:45 & 9:45 p.m. $8-$11*

The Favourite. Early 18th-century England's Queen Anne is ill of health and bad temper as her friend and servant make power grabs. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 11:10 a.m., 1:55 & 7:50 p.m. $8-$10; also at Regency Lido Theater, 3459 Via Lido, Newport Beach, (949) 673-8350. Thurs., Jan. 31, 12:30 & 7 p.m. $9-$11.50; and Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-5701. Thurs., Jan. 31, 1 & 7 p.m. $8-$11*

Stan & Ollie. In Jon S. Baird's 2018 bio-dramedy, Laurel and Hardy the world's most famous comedy duo, try to reignite their film career with a grueling theater tour of post-war Britain. *Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-5701. Thurs., Jan. 31, 11:45 a.m., 2:15, 4:45, 7:15 & 9:55 p.m. $8-$11; also at Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 11:50 a.m., 2:15, 4:45, 7:05 & 9:40 p.m. $8-$10.*

Vice. Adam McKay's 2018 bio-drama details the rise of Dick Cheney, the most powerful vice president in history. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 12:30, 3:30, 6:40 & 9:45 p.m. $8-$10.*

Cold War. Politics, character flaws and unfortunate twists of fate keep a mismatched couple separated in 1950s Poland, Berlin, Yugoslavia and Paris. Presented in Polish with English subtitles. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30 & 9:50 p.m. $8-$10; also at Art Theatre, 2025 E. Fourth St., Long Beach, (562) 438-5435; artlheatrelongbeach.org. Thurs., Jan. 31, 3, 5, 7 & 9 p.m. $8.50-$11.50.*

Being John Malkovich. Frida wraps up a collection of 20th-anniversary screenings with Spike Jonze's freaky 1999 comedy about a temporary file clerk who discovers a small door that opens into the mind of actor John Malkovich (played brilliantly by you-know-who). *The Frida Cinema, 305 E. Fourth St., Santa Ana, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., Jan. 31, 2:30, 5:30 & 8 p.m. $7-$10.*

Gräns (Border). Ali Abbasi's award-winning 2018 Swedish fantasy romdram is about the relationship that develops between a customs officer and a mysterious man. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., Jan. 31, 2:30, 5, 7:30 & 9:50 p.m. $7-$10.*

A Star Is Born. A seasoned musician discovers and falls in love with a struggling artist. As her career takes off, he fights an ongoing battle with his inner demons. *Regency Lido Theater, (949) 673-8350. Thurs., Jan. 31, 4 p.m. $9-$11.50; also at Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., Jan. 31, 4:40 p.m. $8-$10.*

1968: Creation & Catastrophe. This documentary focuses on the shocking events of the most pivotal year in the most controversial conflict in the world. After Israelis and Palestinians share their moving personal recollections onscreen, a panel discussion is presented in front of the screen. *UC Irvine Paul Merage School of Business Auditorium, 4293 Pereira Dr., Irvine, socialecology.uci.edu/webforms/1968. Thurs., Jan. 31, screening, 6:15 p.m., panel, 7:45 p.m. Free, but RSVP to the aforementioned website*

The Least of These: The Graham Staines Story. A local journalist investigates an Australian missionary suspected of illegally proselytizing to leprosy patients. *Various theaters; www.fathomevents.com. Thurs., Jan. 31, 7 p.m. $12.50.*

A Silent Voice: The Movie. A popular boy bullies a deaf girl so much their class shuns him. She transfers, he becomes an outcast; alone and depressed, he sets off to find her to make amends. Dubbed in English. *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Thurs., Jan. 31, 7 p.m. $12.50.*

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The original movie from the franchise pits the heroes in half-shells against the mysterious Foot Clan ransacking the city. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri., doors open, 7:30 p.m., music followed by film, 8 p.m. $15.*

Eraserhead. David Lynch's 1977 head-scratcher of a debut (and Stanley Kubrick's favorite film) is about a couple with a new baby who proves to be unique. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri.-Sat., 10 p.m. $10.*

The Met: Live in HD: Carmen. Sir Richard Eyre's Metropolitan Opera production of the Bizet favorite is sung in French with English subtitles. *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Sat., live, 9:55 a.m., Wed., encores, 1 & 6:30 p.m. $18-$24.*

Groundhog Day: 25th Anniversary Screening. Frida once again celebrates Groundhog Day on Groundhog Day with *Groundhog Day*, Harold Ramis' best film. *The Frida Cinema-thefridacinema.org. Sat., noon, 2:30, 5 & 7:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. The pioneering midnight movie starts with the car of sweethearts Brad and Janet breaking down near the eerie mansion of Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Live shadow-cast troupe Midnight Insanity performs. *Art Theatre, artlheatrelongbeach.org. Sat., 11:55 p.m. $8.50-$11.50.*

Akira. Director Katsuhiro Otomo's 1988 adaptation of his manga series has a bike-gang leader trying to save his friend from a government program called Akira in 2019 Neo-Tokyo. *The Frida Cinema thefridacinema.org. Sun.-Mon., 2:30, 5:30 & 8 p.m. $7-$10.*

Every Act of Life. The Orange County premiere of Jeff Kaufman's documentary on the life and career of American theater icon Terrence McNally. *Chapman University, Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, Marion Knott Studios, Folino Theater, Room 106, 283 N. Cypress St., Orange, (714) 997-6812. Mon., 4 p.m. Free, but ticket required from chapman.universitytickets.com*

Lissa: A Story About Medical Promise, Friendship and Revolution. A free, three-day lecture and screening event dedicated to the graphic novel that follows young girls Anna and Layla, who strike up an unlikely friendship in Cairo that crosses class, cultural and religious divides. Visit the website for more details. *Various UC Irvine locations, illuminations.uci.edu. Tues.-Thurs., Feb. 7. See website for times. Free.*

Donnie Darko. The really great 2001 Richard Kelly flick is about a troubled kid who does very bad things because a big bunny tells him to. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Tues.-Wed., 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

Crazy Rich Asians. A native New Yorker accompanies her longtime boyfriend to his best friend's wedding in Singapore, where she discovers he's loaded and a sought-after bachelor. *Fullerton Public Library, 353 W. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 738-6327 Wed., 6 p.m. Free*

Giant. Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean star in George Stevens' sprawling 1956 epic covering the life of a Texas cattle rancher and his family and associates. *Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-5701. Wed., 7:30 p.m. $9.*

Pretty In Pink. Poor girl Andie must choose between the affections of her dotingchildhood sweetheart and a rich but sensitive playboy. Bring snacks and beverages, but no booze lest you wind up pretty in trouble. *Fullerton Public Library, (714) 738-6327. Thurs., Jan. 31, 1 p.m. Free.*

I Want to Eat Your Pancreas. Enca Mendez's anime adaptation of Yoru Sumino's award-winning novel explores the relationship between terminally ill Sakura and a protagonist known only as "me." Presented in Japanese with English subtitles. *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Thurs., Feb. 7, 7 p.m. $12.50.*

Rebels Without a Submission Short Film Festival. Founded by independent filmmakers, the festival gives students and other cinematic storytellers a big screen on which to show their short works, plus a live audience to watch them. A reception follows the two-hour, second-ever event, which is making its Frida debut. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., Feb. 7, 7:30 p.m. $5.*

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Beware the Demon Barber

Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* comes to South Coast Repertory

BY JOEL BEERS

If it's true that the musical is America's most impactful (let's avoid the word *greatest* in this context, shall we?) contributiim to world theater, there's one name atop the list of composers Stephen Sondheim. He is one of those rare people who manifest in a certain craft or industry that are so innately gifted and prolific that everyone else, regardless of how talented or successful they might be, will always toil in their shadow He is musical theater's answer to Vin Scully and baseball announcing, Bruce Springsteen to a live rock concert, Donald Trump to incoherent, sputtering idiots—no one else even comes close

Yet, while he's praised, revered and adored, people don't really like him. Relatively speaking. He's never rolled out the cash cows a la Andrew Lloyd Webber. Other than *Send In the Clowns*, most normal people couldn't hum a single Sondheim tune His music, lyrics and subject matter can be so complex, rhythmically challenging and obtuse that they're just too much for many a performer and audience member

Maybe he's less Springsteen than Steely Dan?

But it's all incredibly smart and masterfully crafted work, so it's no surprise that South Coast Repertory, a theater that has mostly avoided the musical genre for more than 50 years because, well, it's the musical genre, is wheeling out its seventh Sondheim show—*Sweeney Todd*, lovingly subtitled *The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*—and only its fourth "real" Sondheim piece (the other three were revues)

Fans of *Sweeney* won't be disappointed by this production, as director Kent Nicholson has assembled a vigorous 11-member cast (a bit small for a show that, if budget allowed, could easily be doubled) graced with powerful and beautifully complementary voices that capture the goofy, low-brow vernacular of the poorer denizens of the rapidly industrializing 19th-century London streets, where the play takes place, and the twisted corridors ratcheting through the minds of the bloodthirsty, revenge-driven barber at its heart, as well as those caught up in his madness. (Special mention also to musical director David O and his team of nine musicians, no guitar, but there is a piccolo!)

One challenge that every *Sweeney* production faces is that the titular character isn't much of a character Sweeney is huge in his brooding and malevolence, but he's entirely fueled by a simmering rage never too far from boiling, and there's not much more to him. With his booming bass-baritone voice, David St. Louis is suitably

TANIA THOMPSON/SCR

intimidating and big; as with most Sweeneys, that's all he is But that's enough, since this play is less about him and more about Mrs. Lovett (a suitably comical, but with more than a touch of conscience, Jamey Hood), the struggling pie-maker who alights upon a scheme that turns this from a Victorian penny dreadful blood-and-guts tale into a bizarre pitch-black comedy with more sliced throats than a shochet convention (look it up; I did)

Nicholson's concept downplays an aspect that many productions embrace original director Harold Prince's vision of a London populace caught in the crosshairs of rapid industrialization and quickly losing their souls to furnaces and foundries That London churns out products, using humans as its base working material, much as *Sweeney*'s characters churn out their human-inspired products That is alluded to in this production by the character of Tobias Ragg (a riveting, scene-stealing Conlan Ledwith in a performance that's supporting in name only), an emotionally and economically impoverished youth who endures the story's most harrowing transformation. But Nicholson avoids obvious visual metaphors of ominous steel factories and sooty coal furnaces in favor of a more genuinely theatrical concept, ably executed by John Iacovelli's scenic design and Lap Chi Chu's lighting. Old-timey techniques such as painted backdrops sliding onto stage, drops falling from the ceiling, and lighting that at times cheats shadows as much as it illuminates make it all feel as if we're watching a troupe of actors performing this show in a 19th-century theater.

And that makes this play drenched in murder, greed and vengeance feel more human than a conceptualized piece that attempts to inject a Big Idea kind of method into the madness. The main characters in this *Sweeney Todd* are less symbolic victims crushed and disfigured by a profit-driven industrializing society than they are willing—some far more so than others—actors in an abattoir of bloodletting. As one line repeated in the play suggests, the history of the world has always been who eats who, in this *Sweeney Todd*, as in all productions, the eaten finally get a chance to bite back. But this time, even if they wind up eating one another as much as biting the hands of their masters, they actually seem to like the taste

SWEENEY TODD

at South Coast Repertory, 655 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, www.scr.org Tues.-Fri., 8 p.m., Sat.-Sun., 2:30 & 7:30 p.m. Through Feb. 16. $26-$96

ARTSOVERLOAD

» AIMEE MURILLO

Feb. 1-7

"THE ART OF FELIPE FLORES" A solo show of the Fullerton-based illustrator's work, which depicts '80s girl groups, Batman punk-rock idols and local music scenes in a distinct comic-book style. Fri., 6 p.m. Free. The Coffee Cup, 220 Malden Ave., Fullerton. (815) 217-5017, bibbleton.com.

CRIMES OF THE HEART Beth Henley's funny play is about three sisters who reunite in their hometown after one of them shoots her abusive husband, and all must face past traumas. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 2 p.m. Through Feb. 17. $22-$25. Costa Mesa Playhouse, 661 Hamilton St., Costa Mesa. (949) 650-5269, costamesaplayhouse.com.

SPARKLECON VI The two-day conference on hacking, cybersecurity, coding, Tesla coils and 3D printing also features gaming, lectures, crafts and robot combat matches. Sat.-Sun., 9 a.m., $22.50-$40. 23rd Shop Hackerspace, 418 E. Commonwealth Ave., Ste. 1, Fullerton. (909) 979-1017, www.sparklecon.org.

CAROLE GELKER, *"A SORTA FAIRYTALE"* High-contrast illustrations subvert the storytelling of classic fairy tales to reveal their darker side. Opening reception, Sat., 8 p.m. Gallery open by appointment. Fourth Element Gallery, 218 N. Broadway Ave., Santa Ana. (657) 232-0002, www.fourthelementgallery.com.

"CRAFT REVOLUTION" A group show of mixed, handcrafted art displays the link between the conceptual and the physical. Opening reception, Sat., 8 p.m. Open Thurs.-Sun., noon-5 p.m. Through March 3. Free. Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, 117 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana. (714) 667-1517, www.occca.org.

AMERICAN MONSTER BURLESQUE & BLUES SHOW The monthly performance features sultry dancers accompanied by blues rock musicians. Sat., 9 & 11 p.m. $15-$150. 21+. Harvelle's Long Beach, 201 E. Broadway, Long Beach. (562) 439-3700, langbeach.harvelles.com.

"IN RESIDENCE" Gianna de Genevraye's oil paintings depict public garden scenes from around the world for viewers to absorb their beauty and message of sustainability. Open Mon.-Thurs., 9 a.m.-9 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun., noon-5 p.m. Through March 1. Free. Newport Beach Central Library Gallery, 1000 Avocado Ave., Newport Beach. (949) 717-3800, www.newportbeachlibrary.org.

NATASHA TRETHEWEY'S POEMS, *THRALL* The Pulitzer Prize winner reads from her book a discussion of the intersection of poetry and fiction follows. Thurs., Feb. 7, 8 p.m. Free. Irvine Center, 115 N. Orange St., Orange. (657) 282-0483, hantengofuture.org/events.

DARKMAN

Girl Power Wannabes

Spice Pistols' pop-punk cover band ain't a drag (well, kinda)

BY ALEX DISTEFANO

In May 2018, NBC's *America's Got Talent* featured a hand of middle-aged men in drag performing the Spice Girls' hit song "Wannabe." Ultimately, they were rejected, but one of the judges on the show, former Spice Girl Melanie Brown, gave a standing ovation and admitted to enjoying the group. "I thought you were great!" she shouted.

"To be fair, you sounded a lot better than the original" hissed fellow judge and resident douchebag Simon Cowell.

"Our appearance on *America's Got Talent* was a huge boost for us," Mike Muellenberg says. "I think [the producers] wanted it to be more of a poke at Melanie Brown. But that was a fun experience."

Formed in 2016 and led by longtime San Diego-based, OC-born musician Muellenberg, a.k.a. Harry Scary Spice, the Spice Pistols perform Spice Girls songs (and a handful of originals) à la the Sex Pistols, generating buzz in the Southern California music scene with their outrageous and, as Muellenberg puts it, "very theatric" live shows. The 56-year-old musician says the concept for the band came to him after some discussions with female friends on social media. "I just saw myself doing that in drag, playing those songs like that, and I was literally laughing hard at this image of myself in drag onstage," he says.

Muellenberg talked to some fellow musicians, and before he knew it, a band was born. "I sought out friends I have played with, some that I haven't, and we created individual roles in the band," he says. "Spice Pistols is much more theater than music, but don't get me wrong. We are dudes who can hold our own and play our instruments well."

Combined, the members—performing under the monikers Harry Scary Spice, Ginger Binger Spice, Slosh Posh Spice, Shorty Sporty Spice and Maybe Baby Spice—have at least a quarter century's worth of stage experience. "I needed people who could come together and put the music together quickly and work on a stage show," Muellenberg says. "But we're also grown men comfortable enough with our sexuality to be in full drag onstage."

After studying the music of the Spice Girls, the band found it to be easy to translate into punk rock. And with society's unbridled '90s-pop nostalgia these days, there are plenty of people looking for an excuse to don their Dr. Martens once again. They swapped the saccharine synths and infectiously cheesy harmonies of "Say You'll Be There" with pounding drums, screaming vocals and crunchy guitar. "We were able to save the melodies and bring in punk-rock aggression and speed, and it works so well," Muellenberg says.

So far, the Spice Pistols have one album of recorded material, which includes three interpretations of Spice Girls songs. Among the many guest musicians, Muellenberg says, is local guitar hero Rikk Agnew (the Adolescents, Christian Death, etc.). "We have played around OC, and Rikk has played with us—three shows so far," he says. "We are getting contacted all the time by bands that want to play with us. This has been unbelievable how well this band has been received; I never expected it to take off like this."

Muellenberg says his main objective with Spice Pistols is to offer not only something different, but also thought-provoking entertainment. "This is a performance and very theatrical, we are all playing characters onstage," he says. "Everyone's reaction has been awesome so far; people are digging it. [At] the shows we play, more people are filming us than checking social media, so that's good!"

The Spice Pistols plan to play gigs and tour as much as possible. Their next OC show will be at the Doll Hut in Anaheim, and they've booked spots in the San Diego/Oceanside area.

"We have actually gotten a lot of exposure in the U.K. through social media, and I was recently contacted by a promoter, so I am in contact with a few companies, actively trying to get us a tour over there in the next few months," Muellenberg says. "We are also planning a southwest U.S. [tour] later this year as well. ... We want to break our inner circle of the San Diego area and play all over L.A., OC and the Inland Empire."

SPICE PISTOLS
perform at the Doll Hut, 107 S. Adams St. Anaheim, [562] 277-0075, www.worldfamousdollhut.com Feb. 16, 7 p.m. $10. 21+

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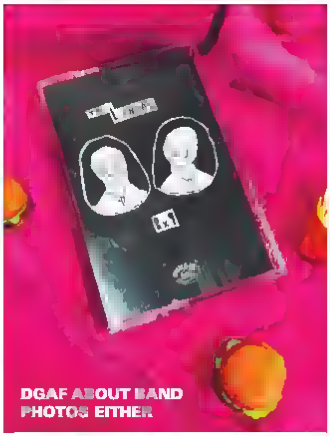
Short But Not-So-Sweet

The Lindas don't give a fuck—and that's fine by us

BY BRITTANY WOOLSEY



BURGER RECORDS

The words "I don't give a fuck" are arguably the best way the Lindas could introduce themselves. The lyrics of the synth-punk group's first single easily represent the attitude the members have toward the norms heard in music today, including the average length of songs.

"I Don't Give a Fuck" begins with a simple melody of three minor chords played on an Elka Panther organ by Tony Santos. Then, singer Yasmine "Yas" Smith commands the listener's attention with the foul-mouthed opening line and her Altered Images-like, high-pitched vocals.

At just longer than the one-minute mark, the tune ends. In fact, the entire record, titled *8x9* (released on cassette Jan. 5 via Burger Records), is over in a flash, spanning nine songs within nine minutes.

Santos describes the Lindas' debut album, which is also available digitally on Spotify, as punk rock "with all the fat cut out."

"We're kind of in the spirit of 'Here's a quick, catchy song,'" he says. "We bang it out, and it's on to the next one."

The Lindas—composed of members of Le Shok, FM Bats and Grand Elegance—met organically through connections in the tight-knit Orange County and Long Beach punk scenes. Santos, who also plays in punk/Goth outfits the Oil Pans and Pipsqueak, met guitarist Vinny Vaguess last year while booking a gig at the Continental Room in Fullerton. They discovered they both wanted to write short synth punk and wrangled in bassist Rusty Cavender (formerly of Le Shok), drummer Tony Matarazzo and Smith.

The newly formed group soon recorded their debut record at Hububaloo Studios in La Habra, accomplishing the feat in one day through *analog* with sound engineer Mike McHugh, who has also worked with acts such as the Growlers and the Black Lips.

The Lindas first dropped *8x9* digitally through ReFry Records, which is co-run by Vaguess, before approaching Burger Records in November about releasing the effort on tape.

Despite the recent release, the members agree they see the Lindas as more of a side project to their other bands and as sort of a way to throw up a middle finger to the standards in today's music industry.

"For even my favorite bands, I don't want to watch them play for more than 20 minutes," Cavender says. "We kind of took that and just amplified it even more to where it was like, 'Let's play 15 songs in 13 minutes. Maybe we won't get to the end of that because we'll get into a fight with somebody or somebody will have a meltdown onstage.' That's what I wanted, and all I could tolerate was 15 to 20 minutes max. I just couldn't understand why any band would get up there and just play for 45 minutes. That just drives me crazy."

The incorporation of a crude female singer à la Bikini Kill also adds to the Lindas' punch but isn't forced.

Cavender says Smith's attitude, which is comparable to that of Joan Jett or Siouxsie Sioux, isn't an act. "That's how she is when she's walking to the liquor store or when she talks," he says. "The lyrics that come out and the way she sings them, that's just her on a Tuesday afternoon."

So far, the band have played just one show, and there are no further commitments. "It was a lot of fun, and things could happen down the road, but it's not our No. 1 focus," Santos says. "It's not that we don't care about music or anything. We care so much that we want to get people excited about punk. It's just this energy thing."

Just like their fleeting tunes, the Lindas leave listeners wanting more.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

DAVID MCCLISTER

Friday

AMIGO THE DEVIL; HARLEY POE; BLIND JOHN POPE: 8 p.m., $13-$15, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2313 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbar.com.

BLACKBERRY SMOKE: 7 p.m., $20, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

DEAD WINTER CARPENTERS; MOONSVILLE COLLECTIVE; DANO FORTE'S JUKE JOINT FREAK SHOW: 8 p.m., $7, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039; www.wayfarercm.com.

MADEINTYO; THUTMOSE; 12 HONCHO: 8 p.m., $20-$80, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

YACHTY BY NATURE: 9 p.m., $15, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

Saturday

THE CROWD, THE PEGS, THE VULTURAS, THE GRINGOZ: 8 p.m., $10, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039; www.wayfarercm.com.

DSB: 8 p.m., $21, all ages. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2700 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2700; www.citynationalgroveofanaheim.com

GUSTER, HENRY JAMISON: 8 p.m., $29, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

DKILLY DOKILLY: 9 p.m., $12, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

THE RINGLEADERS, MAGICK GARDENS, PAT TODD AND THE RANKOUTSIDERS: 8 p.m., free, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2313 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbar.com

SKACADEMY AWARDS: 6 p.m., $2, all ages. Garden Amp, 12762 Main St., Garden Grove, (949) 415-0544; gardenamp.com.

Sunday

ALLISON: 8 p.m., $10; 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

GRMLN, WELLNESS, PSYCHIC ASTROCLUB: 8 p.m., $5, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2313 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbar.com.

Monday

DANI LEIGH: 9 p.m., $15-$55, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

DAVID ROSALES AND HIS BAND OF SCOUNDRELS; TED Z AND THE WRANGLERS; ZACH CHURCHILL: 7:30 p.m., free, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039; www.wayfarercm.com.

GANG OF FOUR: 8 p.m., $25, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com.

Tuesday

LE BUTCHERETTES, STARS AT NIGHT: 9 p.m., $15, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

Wednesday

DJ QUIK: 9 p.m., $25, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

FASHAWN: 9 p.m., $15, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com

THE TOASTERS, THE SCOTCH BONNETS, BITE ME BAMBI, LOS NAUTICALS: 8 p.m., $12, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2313 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbar.com.

Thursday, Feb. 7

BEATLES VS. STONES: 7 p.m., $15, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

DJ QUIK: 9 p.m., $25, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

THE WOGGLES, THE SCHIZOPHONICS, THE TWO TENS: 8 p.m., $10, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2313 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbar.com.

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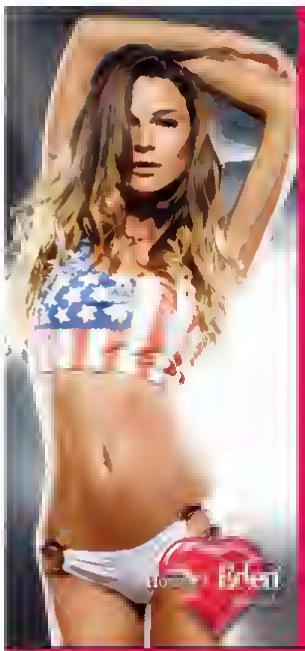

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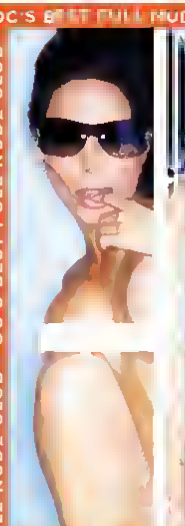

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Omissions and Emissions

SavageLove

» DAN SAVAGE

I'm a 21-year-old woman, and I have an IUD. I've had sex with quite a few men, and one thing seems to be almost constant among them: trying to fuck without condoms. Many of the men I've been with seem to be perfectly fine and terribly eager to have sex without condoms. This has always angered me. They generally assume or make sure I'm on birth control, which they immediately take to mean condom-free sex is welcome. I don't want to have sex without condoms without being in a committed relationship. I know people cheat and monogamy doesn't mean STIs won't happen, but it's a risk I'm comfortable with. I'm so annoyed by how often men try to get out of using condoms (it's often persistent, even with people I've been seeing a while) that I want to start lying and say I'm not on birth control. The risk of a baby seems to be the only STI most men are concerned with. Is it all right for me to lie and say I'm not on any birth control, then explain why I lied later if things get serious?

I'm Understandably Distressed

Let's get this out of the way first: You're right, IUD sexually transmitted infections (STI) do happen to people in monogamous relationships. People cheat, people lie, people contract, people transmit. A 2015 study found that people in consensually nonmonogamous (CNM) relationships were no more likely to contract an STI than people in monogamous relationships. The reason? If a person in a monogamous relationship screws around and doesn't use a condom, they can't ask their partner to start using condoms again without drawing attention to their infidelity. If someone in a CNM relationship asks their primary partner to start using condoms again—because a condom broke or fell off or didn't wind up on a cock for some other reason—they're drawing attention to their fidelity. Moving on…

Right again, IUD. Babies do seem to be the only STI many men are worried about. Australian researchers conducted a large study about stealthing—the deeply shitty-rape-adjacent practice of surreptitiously removing the condom during intercourse—and they were shocked to discover how common this deeply shitty practice seems to be.

"The researchers estimated in advance that approximately 2 percent of the sample would report having been stealthed," sex researcher Justin Lehmiller wrote in a blog post looking at the results of the study. "In fact, 32 percent of the women and 19 percent of the men surveyed reported having experienced stealthing. … A majority of both groups reported discussing the event with their partner afterward, and most also reported feeling emotionally stressed about it. A majority also considered stealthing to be a form of sexual assault. These results suggest that stealthing is not a rare occurrence and we would do well to study it further."

The researchers didn't ask heterosexual men about being stealthed, and as Lehmiller points out, there are some scattered reports out there about women poking holes in condoms before sex or removing them after sex. We don't need a study to tease out the motives of these women—they want to have a child and don't care whether their partners do (and that is *not okay*)—but we could use a study that asked heterosexual men about their motives for stealthing. One question we should put to these assholes: Are they more likely to "go stealth," i.e., to sexually assault a woman, if they know her to be on some other form of birth control? Or are they just so wrapped up in their own momentary sexual pleasure that they don't give a shit about babies or any of the other STIs?

Moving on to your actual question …

Can you lie? Of course you can. *Should* you lie? In the case of a casual sex partner who might not have your best interests at heart, i.e. some total rando you went to fuck but aren't sure you can trust, I think you can lie and should lie. This lie doesn't do him any harm, it's not like you're telling him you're on birth control when you're not. And if telling this lie inspires some rando to be more careful about keeping the condom on (sometimes condoms fall off by accident), then it's a lie that made the sex safer for you and for him.

And if you get serious about someone you initially lied to about having an IUD—if some dude makes the transition from hot rando to hot boyfriend—and he reacts badly when you tell him the truth (just say (or text) this to him: "I could have waited to fuck you until I was sure you were a good guy. But then you would have missed out on all the awesome sex we've had up to now. Would that have been better? And by coming clean now, I'm basically saying that I think you're a good guy that I can trust. I know that *now*, but I didn't always know it because I'm not psychic. Now do you want to rew-dog me, or do you want to complain?"

My girlfriend opposes sex work because she believes it oppresses women. Early in our relationship, she demanded to know if I had ever paid for sex because she couldn't be with me if I had. And I told her the truth. "No, never." She didn't ask if I'd ever been paid for sex. (One guy, he blew me, on women were oppressed because no women were involved…it happened twice.) Do I need to tell her?

Two-Time Gay For Pay

Nope.

My partner is too embarrassed to raise this question with his doctor: Is it safe for me to drink my partner's urine? He's HIV-positive, but his viral load is undetectable. I know that other STIs could potentially be passed on to the watersports maven through urine. My partner has been tested for everything and has no other STIs. He is worried that his urine could contain enough of his antiretroviral drugs (Tivicay and Descovy) to do me harm. He is particularly worried that I might suffer from the side effects of those drugs. I are not currently on any medications. I believe that his fear stems from when he was on chemo drugs for something else. Nurses treating him then advised me not to use his hospital bathroom so that I would not possibly be exposed to any chemo-drug residue. I know that you're not a doctor—but could you ask a doctor for us?

Ingesting Medicines

"This one is easy," said Dr. Peter Shalit, a physician who has been treating people with HIV/AIDS for 30 years. "Tivicay and Descovy are very benign medicines with very little potential toxicity in standard doses. If one were to drink the urine of someone taking these medicines, there would be essentially no Tivicay—as this medicine is excreted by the liver, not the kidneys. The remnants of the drug are excreted in the feces, so to get significant exposure to second-hand Tivicay you'd have to eat … well, never mind."

As for Descovy—that's actually two medicines in one. First, the bad news: Emtricitabine and tenofovir alafenamide, the meds in Descovy, are excreted in the urine. And the good news. "The amount of Descovy that would be in 1 liter of urine is much less than a single pill's worth," said Dr. Shalit, who is also a member of the American Academy of HIV Medicine. "Since these medicines are intrinsically very safe to begin with, in my opinion, the health risk from exposure to the small amounts that may be found in urine is negligible. Don't worry about it."

On the Lovecast (savagelovecast.com), Andrew Gurza on dating with disabilities. Contact Dan via mail@savagelove.net, follow him on Twitter @fakedansavage, and visit ITMFA.org.

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Toke of the Week

» JEFFERSON VANBILLIARD

Learn to Forget

Founded in 2013 by musicians Reilly Herrera (Night Verses) and Mike Cambra (Adolescents, Death By Stereo), Learn to Forget creates clothing inspired by everything from DIY show fliers to tongue-in-cheek puns involving our favorite plant. The Orange County–based brand relies heavily on its punk-rock roots, as well as its ties to the graffiti, skateboarding and cannabis communities. Each piece is hand sewn by local seamstresses in small batches without sacrificing quality or fair pricing.

In addition to adhering to a strong belief in individuality, Learn to Forget serves the very counterculture community that has supported it by offering shocking, thought-provoking clothing that challenges social norms and its ideals. And the company has been steadily growing, expanding to core retailers and boutiques in the U.S. and internationally—which means you should get your hands on some before the kids with their parents' credit cards do. Head to learntoforgetbrand.com and fill up a shopping cart!

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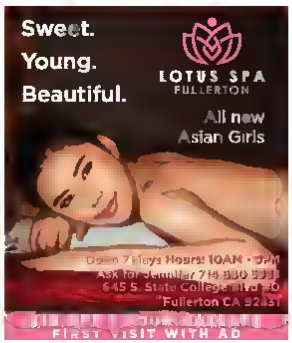
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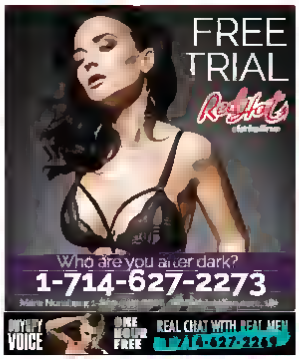
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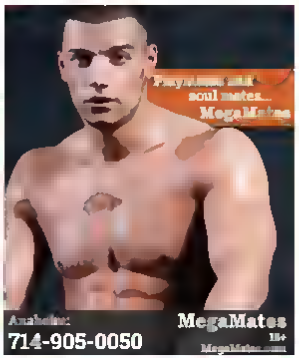
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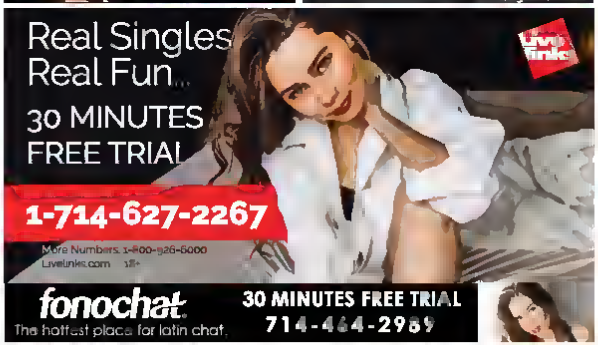
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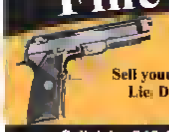
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The Basketball Prince of Fountain Valley

Kareem Tayyar's fictional, self-guided, preteen Fountain Valley adventure tour puts his hometown on the map of the imagination

BY ANDREW TONKOVICH

Driving through it on the 405 freeway, you'd be forgiven for missing Fountain Valley altogether. Or perhaps chuckling at its "A Nice Place to Live" motto and Chamber of Commerce-style boosterism of a popular bowling alley, the Fountain Bowl. And what about that accurately, if unimaginatively christened, county park, Mile Square? A recent Orange County literary anthology references the former city of Talbert, once called "Gospel Swamps," not at all. I know because I co-edited the collection, my research often otherwise turning up poetry, fiction and essays that changed my mind, happily, about so many burgs even more seemingly unremarkable or unlikely than this town of 55,000 on the Santa Ana River.

In fact there's plenty of artful storytelling possibility in the history and place of shy, overlooked Fountain Valley: the tale of Colonia Juarez, its original Mexican-immigrant community. The amazing life of founding mayor Jim Kanno, who was sent to an internment camp but later became the first Japanese-American elected to that office in the nation. The painting and eventual destruction of the iconic "Fountain Valley Mural," a centerpiece of 1970s street-art cultural renaissance. The arrival of Vietnamese refugees.

And now poet and favorite son Kareem (Paul) Tayyar puts his hometown on the literary map with a novel set in a version of his old neighborhood. *The Prince of Orange County* invites us to reconsider this otherwise-unassuming master-planned suburban town, named not for monumental fountains but for its almost perversely plentiful water table, a defining feature of this once-bountiful agricultural and sheep-herding region. Tayyar's fictionalized memoir-meets-literary adventure dramatizes vivid and instructive episodes in the life of a young boy, Thomas Kabiri, as well as the city and county in the mid-'80s. And while the significance of this OC Anywhereville matters less to the 10-year-old hero than playing basketball, his 1986 summer vacation delivers a revisionist history lesson about community and empathy that perhaps anticipates Orange County's shift from Reagan red to blue and argues that with encouragement, role models, intellectual and emotional curiosity, and some mischief, a boy might become a humane, empathetic man.

Thomas is, of course, a stand-in for Tayyar, himself a small but accomplished local b-ball star who became an award-winning writer and professor at Golden West College. The novel's charmingly braggadocios title calls out its hero's own youthful, joyful boosterism via his commitment to the purple pop-music icon. It also foreshadows the big revelation/realization that a small town with good people and, as it turns out, all kinds of diversity can prepare children for adulthood. Think D.J. Waldie's honest, critical, if ultimately esteeming biography of Lakewood, a loving meditation on another working-class town easily disregarded. As Waldie did in *Holy Land*, Tayyar portrays a "more complex American suburb" than expected.

Complexity arrives through immersion in the everyday civic and social interactions of engaging characters living in his complicated version of the real-life place. Our hero resides in the Sunwood Apartments (the now-gone Shakewood Apartments, once on Slater) near St. Sebastian's Church (Holy Spirit Catholic on Ward Avenue). He's a diminutive basketball savant who joins pick-up games at Matsuya Middle School (Masuda Middle School). Thomas knows well the local blocks and avenues because, besides paying attention, he works a newspaper route when not listening to Prince and watching cartoons, Westerns and then-ubiquitous if campy Burt Reynolds car- (and women-) chase films.

An only child, this sincere if precocious Iranian-American kid (half Catholic, half Muslim) runs, dribbles, shoots and talks his way into the all-American lives of older kids and adults and is taken under the wing of a Jewish deli owner and coach and—tiny spoiler alert—onetime African-American basketball pro. His own father left Thomas and his hardworking mom in their modest apartment to sneak back into Iran for his grandma's funeral in the oppressive old—and America-hating—country. That's a gorgeous set-up for a small, intense life getting bigger, with a winning throughline of reconciliation and realization putting the lie to life here as boring. Tayyar's lively, dialogue-rich narrative and Thomas's keen observations make the kid's ensuing adventures thrilling, from Newport's Lifeguard Tower 32 to the Garden Grove Reservoir and Laguna's Main Beach courts and even faraway Los Angeles—alone!—by train.

Best are those tightly dramatized iconic moments that made a crazy time memorable for both author and our diminutive if smart, sensitive kid, including witnessing the famous August 1986 surf contest turned teen riot at the Huntington Beach Pier, with cars set on fire, baton-wielding cops, even a police helicopter. Readers will delight in his frightened if hilarious take on that original iteration of an HB tradition that's re-enacted by drunken belligerents nearly every Fourth of July since, with various added portions of alcohol, guns and white nationalism.

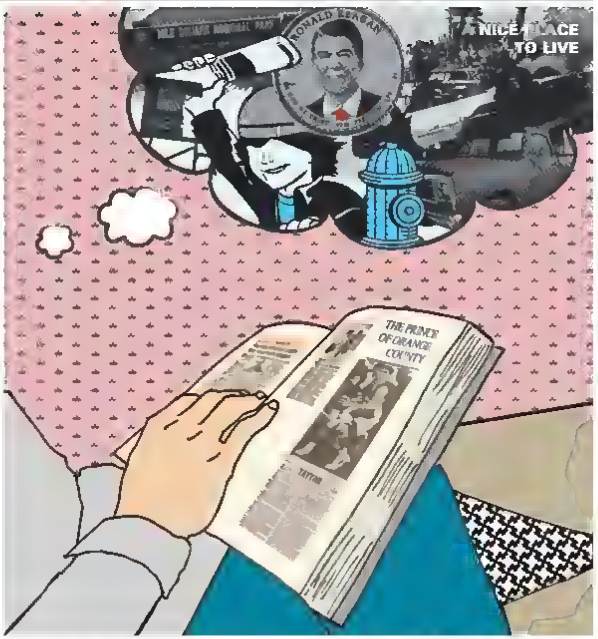

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL ZIOBROWSKI

Thomas' street-level perspective arrives in precise, idiosyncratic snapshots of everyday wonder: "You'll see a trio of day laborers walking to the bus stop after a day spent painting houses for under-the-table money. You'll see a 1982 Dodge pickup illegally parked in front of a blue fire hydrant that, for reasons which no one in the area can fully explain, has long been referred to as 'Buddha.'"

Or, this, watching cartoons: "Why, he wonders, does the Road Runner never move on, go west, put some distance between himself and the Coyote, who obviously has an ax to grind he's never going to get over?"

It's funny and chock-full of movie, music and sports allusions, all argued over passionately as young people do. And yes, early on, the hateful anti-Iran bumper sticker is meant to hurt him, even as our sweet goodwill ambassador charms the neighbors; misses his wise, Persian poetry-reciting dad, and ruminates on the NBA, girls, sex, women in bathing suits, men watching women and girls in bathing suits—in other words, grown-up behavior and misbehavior. His observation about the riot might apply to U.S.-Iran relations, adult conflict, his friends' divorced parents and more: "It seems impossible that the craziness of a few men has infected so many others in such a short amount of time, yet there's no denying that it has."

Celebrated as a local champ, the real-life local "wonder boy" Paul Tayyar grew up, didn't make it to pro ball, went to college and grad school, then published acclaimed poetry as Kareem. He goes home again in this novel of appreciation for a Fountain Valley made so real—perhaps more real than it ever was. It's remembered here, reconstructed and re-imagined, with both the proximity and urgency of youth and the thoughtfulness of maturity, celebrating an even-nicer place to have lived.

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